

Price Creek Watershed Project

A joint project of the Iowa & Benton County Soil & Water Conservation Districts

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Press Release

For immediate release

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Desire to Protect Water Quality Leads to Partnerships - Funding

Williamsburg, IA – Good news is occurring for water quality in the Price Creek watershed located in Iowa and Benton counties. The Iowa and Benton County Soil and Water Conservation Districts recently received word that two grant applications submitted to the Iowa Department of Agriculture, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and the Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board have been approved. Funding from the State of Iowa along with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentives (EQIP) Program will provide over \$500,000 in financial and technical assistance to landowners in Price Creek Watershed over the next three years.

Price Creek is a 13 mile long tributary of the Iowa River located in southeast Benton County and the northeast corner of Iowa County. The watershed is nearly 19,000 acres in size beginning north of the town of Marengo and ending below the village of Amana where it flows into the Iowa River.

Price Creek is located in a long narrow watershed with unique narrow steep sided valleys. NRCS District Conservationist Steve Johnston observes that “the susceptibility to stream bank and gully erosion and the fact that the creek empties into the upper reaches of Coralville Lake after winding through historic Amana Village has led the Iowa County Soil and Water Conservation District to select it as a priority watershed.”

Last year, the District and project partners completed a detailed watershed assessment to identify and prioritize water quality resource concerns. The assessment identified bacteria and soil erosion as primary and secondary resource concerns effecting water quality in Price Creek and further more, the Iowa River which is listed on the 2004 EPA 303(d) List of Impaired Waters for bacteria.

“Through the assessment process, we were able to identify specific areas of the stream and watershed with the highest potential to impact water quality” explains Johnston. “Addressing these areas with conservation is the focus of this project.”

Most recently, the Iowa Soil and Water Conservation District has hired a project coordinator to work with landowners in the Price Creek Watershed. Aaron Pickens, Environmental Specialist with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship’s Division of Soil Conservation comes to the Price Creek project from south central Iowa where he has served the past three years as a project coordinator on a water quality improvement project for the Rathbun Lake watershed.

“We are pleased to have Aaron on board to assist producers in the watershed. His knowledge of agriculture and experience in water quality improvement efforts make him an ideal fit for Price Creek” says Johnston.

Pickens will be working with landowners over the next three years to implement a variety of Best Management Practices aimed at reducing the bacteria, nutrients, and sediment loads making its way into Price Creek. Practices available include fencing, livestock use exclusion, establishment of alternative water sources, filter strips and buffers, manure and nutrient management and testing, terraces, water and sediment control basins, ponds, and grassed waterways. Seventy-five percent cost-share assistance will be available for those who are eligible.

To complement these efforts, an extensive information and education effort will also be developed. Throughout the next three years, the project will be putting together a variety of workshops and demonstrations dealing with manure and nutrient management, livestock grazing issues, as well as septic and well systems in the watershed.

“Price Creek is a unique and diverse watershed. I am looking forward to meeting and working with the landowners in the watershed to develop a plan that fits their operation” says Pickens.

The Price Creek Watershed project is supported in part by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship’s Division of Soil Conservation through funds of the Water Protection Fund and Watershed Protection Fund, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Federal Non-point Source Management Program (Section 319 of the Clean Water Act), and the Iowa Watershed Improvement Fund administered by the Iowa Watershed Improvement Review Board. Technical assistance is being provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resource Conservation Service.